

STORY 78

A MARKED DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A MUSLIM
AND A CHRISTIAN CONQUEROR.

ALP ARSALAM was a king of the Seljuk dynasty. His sway extended from the Caspian sea to the Bosphorus. Once he was attacked by the emperor on whom he inflicted a crushing defeat. Thousands of Romans were taken prisoners. But instead of being made to pay ransom, they were very generously provided with money for the journey home, and were set free. But Roman emperor would not accept defeat so tamely. So he again took the field in great force. Alp Arsalam protested against this unprovoked attack, tried his best to avoid the bloodshed and for this purpose made every effort to move the emperor to come to terms. But the proud emperor returned a haughty answer to his overtures of peace, and put them down to his weakness.

When Alp Arsalam was convinced that the foolish emperor was bent on war he shed tears at the prospect of so much bloodshed. Then he descended from his throne and prostrated himself on the ground before God and thus gave expression to his humility. Then he made the following speech before his army: "My brothers in arms I am sure that your loyalty and devotion of which you have given an ample proof on many a hard contested field will not allow you to forsake

me at this hour. But if any of you is not willing to fight under me I allow him of my free will to depart in peace." The armies met. The Roman emperor sustained a crushing defeat and was taken prisoner.

When he was brought before the victor, Alp Arsalam received him with great honour. He descended from the throne, and advanced a few steps, and shaking hands with him seated him on the throne by his side.

One day in the course of conversation Alp Arsalam said to the emperor, "What treatment do you expect from me?" The emperor replied, "If you are a tyrant you will kill me. If you are vain you will gratify your vanity by keeping me a prisoner. But if you are a seeing and generous statesman you will set me free and win my good will and everlasting loyalty." The Sultan said: "Supposing fate had reserved our fortunes, and I had fallen in your hands what treatment would you have meted out to me?"

The foolish emperor replied "if you had fallen into my hands I would have caused you to be flogged." Hearing this insolent answer which betrayed the ungrateful and evil nature of the speaker, Alp Arsalam only smiled and said "Your Christian religion may sanction this sort of treatment. But Islam teaches us otherwise. I thank God I am not your prisoner and I assure you I will treat you as I am enjoined by my religion." Sometime after the emperor was granted his liberty after his promising to freedom all the muslim captives held by the Romans,